

South Bend Argonauts First Discovered Gold on Rocky Mountain Range, Marking New Epoch in History of the Great West

By C. B. Stephenson.

During the long stretch of time between the adoption of the federal constitution in 1787 and the beginning of the civil war in 1861, American history holds record of many occurrences of intense national interest and epochal importance, but numerous as these events have been, it is a matter of great surprise how few of them were of international consequence, or in any way identified with the history of the world and the activities of mankind outside the United States. It will doubtless be none the less surprising to the people of this community to know that "once upon a time" South Bend became closely connected with an event of such widespread influence in the progressive and economic affairs of the human family that its name stands today on a permanent and enduring basis in the annals of universal history.

The particular achievement, which made South Bend a prominent factor in international affairs was brought about through the heroic endeavors of nine of our sturdy pioneers, who 57 years ago in the strength and vigor of their early manhood went out into the world, encountered the dangers and vicissitudes of travel across the long, alkali stretches of the great American desert, penetrated the dark and shadowy gulches of Clear Creek canyon, where, for countless ages, lofty peaks and crags had stood in mute and awe-inspiring silence, unbroken even by the moccasined footsteps of the Indian, and with unconquerable courage and self-denial fought their way against almost insurmountable difficulties to what has proven to be the fountain head of America's greatest accumulation of golden wealth, and with pick, shovel and pan, dug, washed and sluiced the steep and rugged sides of an historic old mountain, and were finally rewarded with the rich discovery that first revealed to the world the hidden treasure concealed within the great Rocky mountain range. Then, and there, and on that spot, these heroic men of South Bend founded an empire, which in its fullness of time gave to this country of ours the great state of Colorado. Important as this achievement was to American interests, it was of infinitely greater importance in its beneficial relations to mankind and its influence on world-making history, for the reason that from the first discovery other rich mines were soon located in the vicinity, thus making it the foundation and very beginning of a new American enterprise, which rapidly developed into an industry of colossal proportions extending thousands of miles north and south from the first great find. This vast production of yellow metal in time started a new of gold into the coffers of the United States government, then in death grapple with civil war, and finally became one of the great sources of aid in the suppression of that gigantic rebellion.

After the close of the sanguinary conflict this flow of gold was turned into the channels of finance and commerce of the world, and America from that time became a highly influential power in the busy marts of trade in every quarter of the inhabitable globe.

Some idea of the importance of the first discovery of gold on the "backbone of the continent" by our valorous South Bend pioneers is gained by a retrospective view of the advance of the human race from the "dawn of civilization" down to the twentieth century. From the beginning of time gold had been valuable for the uses of man; the ancients were acquainted with it, but the quantity they had was so small that it was only employed in the making of ornaments. Primitive man, for lack of better materials, used the pelts of animals, feathers of birds, and products of forest and field as a medium of exchange, but as he grew in wisdom and developed in civilization he adopted such mineral products as silver, brass, copper and iron as currency. But the low value of these materials rendered them too bulky for the purposes intended, so, when gold was discovered in Austria, Saxony and Spain during the middle ages, it marked a new era in the evolution of the business world. Though the supply was meager, for the first time it was employed as money, but the human family increased and its financial requirements broadened, the difficulties arising from the scarcity of the precious metal grew more acute, and the lack of sufficient gold in time became a serious impediment in its progress; hence the California discovery in 1848 and the Australian discovery in 1851 came like a divine blessing. Providential as was this increased volume of gold, it was still not sufficient to meet the ever increasing demands of trade, and it was left for the adventurous men of South Bend to explore and make new discoveries, which in time brought forth the fabulous wealth of the Colorado mines in sufficient quantity to establish gold as a standard of value on all products and commodities in the uses of mankind and the basis of all business transactions by every nation on the face of the earth. Therefore such an event could not fail to be of tremendous consequence in its beneficial effect on the activities of man and the civilizing influences to which the human mind is susceptible.

The purpose of this paper has no object farther than to give details of the story of how South Bend became so large an element in the creation of a new state in the federal union and automatically gained prominence in the world's history, and, by way of comparison, to briefly review American contributions to important international events as they occurred in the following chronological order:

Settlement of incipient war with France in 1800.
Louisiana purchase in 1803.
Lewis and Clarke exploring expedition in 1804-06.
War with England in 1812.
Suppression of piracy on the Barbary coast by the United States navy in 1815.
Purchase of Florida from Spain in 1819.
Promulgation of Monroe doctrine in 1823.
Prof. Morse's experiments in telegraphy in 1836, and successful application in 1844.
Annexation of the provincial government of Texas in 1845.
Declaration of war against Mexico in 1846.
Beginning of boundary dispute with Great Britain, "54 40" or "fight," in 1846.
Acquisition of California by treaty with Mexico in 1848.
Discovery of gold on Sutter farm, California, in 1848.
Organization of the New York, New Foundland & London Telegraph Co. by Cyrus W. Field, Peter Cooper and other distinguished Americans and securing of all American territorial rights for the Atlantic cable in 1859.
First discovery of gold in Rocky mountains by South Bend prospectors in 1859.
Certain circumstances preceding this last great event require some reference to an unmediated but experienced miner named John Gregory, who had gained minor knowledge in the small gold fields in the hills of Georgia. During the early spring of 1858 Mr. Gregory and a companion left their southern homes and started for the gold fields of California, by way of the old Santa Fe trail. When they reached the vicinity of Pike's peak in the Rocky mountains they began prospecting for gold along the numerous streams of water running from the mountains out through the plains. From the very first they found what miners call "color," (slight indication of gold), and finally abandoned the California trail and proceeded in their investigations, working north from the first indication of valuable mineral deposits. By mid-summer they had reached one of the tributaries of the south branch of the Platte river, where the city of Denver now stands, and found substantial indications of the existence of gold in paying quantities; they named this stream "Cherry Creek," established a permanent location on its banks, and in a short time had started on what seemed to be the road to vast wealth.

new colony on the banks of the great Salt Lake, Utah, so the news of the rich gold mines was carried rapidly to every mine and corner of the United States, and even extended to Canada, Europe, Australia and around the world. At that time Pike's Peak was the only locality in the whole Rocky mountain range known to the world, so at once the new "diggings" were called "Pike's Peak," although that famous peak is some 75 miles south from the original location on Cherry Creek.

As time went on reports of the fabulous wealth of the new mining camp grew in exaggeration as rapidly as the news traveled, and the whole country became thoroughly aroused, so that by the early spring of 1858 there was a great stampede from every part of the United States to the "New Eldorado in the West." Thousands upon thousands endured hardship and perils of travel across the desolate, alkali plains, going by every mode of travel that could be pressed into service. The writer has personal recollection of at least three South Bend men, who for lack of better means, put their supplies into push carts and walked every step of the way from South Bend to the end of their journey.

The Pike's Peak fever caught the people of this town good and hard and in large numbers they joined the man rush, which had for its slogan, "Pike's Peak, or Bust." To afford protection against Indians and other dangers of such a trip it was the custom to form companies in groups of six to 12 persons, and among these groups so formed was one composed of D. K. and J. H. Wall, Wilkinson and Archibald DeFreese, John W. and C. M. Ziegler, W. E. Chess, D. P. Spain and W. H. Dewey. D. K. Wall, who was experienced in mining, was chosen captain of this company, which set out on the long and weary journey with high hopes and undaunted courage.

Unfortunately, or otherwise, Gregory's discovery on Cherry Creek proved to be what miners call a "pocket," that is, small particles of gold accumulated at given points by the action of water flowing out from fixed mineral deposits in the mountains, and by the close of the year 1858 Gregory and his partner had worked out the entire deposit and suspended operations, and Gregory joined a small band of friendly Arapahoe Indians living in the vicinity under a chief named Friday. He remained until the following June, when, through a fortunate circumstance, he fell in with the South Bend company.

By the time our valiant band of pioneers had proceeded well on its way to the goal of its hopes and ambitions, the failure of the mines on Cherry Creek had been spread broadcast by returning emigrants, who gave out doleful and discouraging reports of "no gold at Pike's Peak," but, with a purpose characteristic of South Bend pioneers, these determined men plodded on in their dreary and weary journey, and finally reached Denver on the first day of June 1859. On their arrival they unhappily found confirmation of the reported failure of the mines, but they also heard during a few days' rest preparatory to their return journey, that some men were making day wages at placer mining on Clear Creek, some 10 miles west of Denver, and to this point they at once made their way. They arrived at Clear Creek "diggings" at 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, and, as customary, made camp and turned their horses out to graze.

It was always the duty of one of the members of the company to go out a little before dark and bring in the horses to tie up for the night, and on this particular occasion it was John W. Ziegler who performed this service. A short time before Mr. Ziegler died he related the following incident to the writer:

"The horses had wandered away from a mile from the camp, and as I reached the herd I saw in the gathering dusk a human being approaching which I mistook for an Indian, but when he came within speaking distance and began talking in plain but somewhat primitive English, he introduced himself as John Gregory and said he was the man who had discovered gold at Denver, and related further that when the pocket played out he had given up mining and had joined Friday's band of Indians and had been living with them ever since. He also said that the Indians and himself were suffering very much from lack of salt. Mr. Ziegler told Gregory they had plenty of salt and would furnish him with some if he would go to the camp and talk of mining with D. K. Wall. He accepted the invitation, and, as they walked along toward the camp, in his rude speech Gregory said that 'air gold in them 'air creeks is from up yander in them mountains, and if a body could git to the spot it comes from he could find plenty of it and git rich.' On arrival at the camp the South Benders prepared supper for Gregory and had a conference with him lasting until midnight. He convinced Mr. Wall that he was a genuine miner, and the South Bend company decided to 'grab stake' him; that is to say, they agreed to furnish horses, food and a prospecting outfit against his experience to go into the heart of the mountains and share whatever proceeds might be found.

"All the members of the company were equal partners in its assets, consisting of horses, wagons, camp equipment, provisions, etc., so the contribution of Gregory made all of them equally interested in such claims as might be found, but it was further agreed that anyone remaining behind and not taking part in the prospecting trip should not participate in the proceeds arising from the placer mining carried on by the prospectors. Mr. Wall, desiring to make some agricultural experiments, assented to this proposition and induced his cousin, J. H. Wall, to remain in the valley with him, thus creating a temporary but friendly separation in the ranks of the company. Mr. Wall's experiment subsequently proved to be of such importance to Colorado and the whole country that an explanation of how it was brought about and its final results might be interesting to the present generation."

In 1852 Mr. Wall had been in a stampede to the gold fields of California, and when crossing the plains and mountains in the vicinity of the present site of Cheyenne, Wyo., he had observed that the lands bordering on the streams running out from the foothills seemed to be exceedingly fertile. So, when he decided to go to the Pike's Peak country, he secured a supply of garden seeds and field grain, which proved to be an exceedingly fortunate circumstance, beneficial alike to himself and the new country, as the seeds and grains that he planted on the banks of Clear Creek were the first that had ever been laid in the virgin soil of the great American desert. The yield was enormous and not only proved very profitable but brought great distinction to Mr. Wall as the pioneer farmer in the Rocky mountain region. What he accomplished added another link in the chain that binds South Bend so closely in historical relation to pioneer days in Colorado and brought renown to his home town. So important was this event that Mr. Wall's name is held in grateful and affectionate remembrance by the present generation of the centennial state, and he is and will ever remain one of the honored and conspicuous figures in its early history. We may be as sure as the plantings on Clear Creek nearly 60 years ago were the beginning and real foundation of agricultural pursuits of the great Rocky mountain section of America, which, as time went on, developed into a vast farming industry that has added many millions to the fabulous mineral wealth of the beautiful mountain state.

On the morning following the conference with Mr. Gregory the two DeFreeses, two Zieglers, Chess, Spain and Dewey started with him up the mountains through the unknown, unfathomable Clear Creek canyon, and there began a terrible journey of privation and hardship. The height and abrupt elevation of the mountains standing in close formation on both sides of Clear Creek prevented the rays of the sun penetrating far into the deep caverns, which, with the thick standing pine forests, gave a dark and gloomy appearance to the situation that made the route of travel a most gruesome and forbidding prospect, discouraging enough indeed to have driven back in despair less determined spirits than our intrepid South Benders, but their unbounded, unconquerable ambition held them with grim courage to their chosen task, and as they proceeded up the canyon without the slightest knowledge of what lay before them, their difficulties and hardships became more acute each day. Their troubles were further increased by high boulders that had broken off and rolled down the steep sides of the mighty mountains, and piled in great confusion in the bed and on the banks of the stream they were following. In many instances the rush of these immense boulders carried with them thousands of trees growing on the mountain side and added to the promiscuous piles in the bottom of the gulch. These obstructions seriously impeded their progress and added to the fatiguing labors of prospecting, and in some instances actually compelled the explorers to cut and pry their way through with picks and axes. These awful conditions rendered progress very slow, to an extent indeed that they proceeded no less than half a mile in some days, and at the end of three weeks had advanced only about 15 miles into the heart of the mountain. At this point, however, a great change in the topography of the country suddenly appeared to their vision, which, in some measure, gave relief from the terrible trials and discomforts they had endured. It was a beautiful little park or valley in the heart of the mountains that opened before them at the confluence of the north and south forks of Clear Creek with an abundance of much needed grass for their tired horses. After a day of rest they resumed their prospecting activities, and within two days found rich reward for their sufferings by the discovery of the fountainhead of the vast wealth that has since enriched the entire world.

Reports of the new find soon spread into the valley around Denver and another great rush set in that eclipsed all former gold stampedes and continued unabated during the balance of the summer. Among these stampedes was Horace Greeley, the famous editor of the New York Tribune. Mr. Greeley happened to be crossing the plains just at that time on his way to California, and hearing of the new mines stopped over to investigate the reports of the fabulous wealth the South Benders had discovered. He remained at the mines for a couple of days and made his headquarters with them, and it was the letters he subsequently wrote to the New York Tribune that gave insight into the importance of the rich discovery of gold in vast quantities in the Rocky mountains and with prophetic vision said it was a grand event in American history and described the powerful influence it would have on the finance and commerce of the world.



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Directly following this wonderful discovery in the bed of the creek it was found that there was a thick vein of decomposed quartz and free gold running up the side of the adjacent mountain, which they had named Gregory Hill. This was staked off in claims of 100 feet each and divided among the members of the company, who drew lots for the first, second and third choice, etc., and it was these mines which subsequently proved of unheard of richness and from which have since been taken immense quantities of gold, a substantial contribution to the sound currency desirable in all financial transactions.

At the time our South Bend heroes made this valuable discovery it was believed that great snowfalls, which came from the higher ranges of perpetual and everlasting snow would begin early in the fall and fill all the gulches to a depth that it would be impossible for man to exist through the winter months, so preparations were made to leave the country in September. So general was this belief that the South Bend miners sold their claims for nominal sums to others, who, with less good fortune, had not made a strike and were willing to take a chance, and with the exception of David and John Wall, who made permanent homes in Colorado, returned to South Bend. Their arrival here late in October of 1859 caused a great sensation, as each of them brought back about \$4,000 in gold as a reward for the sacrifices they had endured during the preceding summer, an amount in those days regarded quite a fortune.

All the members of this famous company have gone to their last reward with the exception of W. E. Chess, (uncle of John Chess Ellsworth), who, I believe, is living in quite dignified retirement in Louisville, Ky. A record of their wonderful achievement as empire builders is preserved among the archives of the historical society of Colorado, thus giving authenticity to South Bend's connection with one of the great historical events in the world's progress. The trials and tortures these men so patiently and courageously endured deserving reward to themselves, but South Bend on the map of the world, made name and fame for succeeding generations, and gave our beloved city a grand and substantial record in the financial and commercial transactions of the universe, which will endure to the end of time.

Countess Von Bernstorff Joins Husband

(Count and Countess von Bernstorff, photographed on the deck of the Frederick VIII., after the count had boarded the vessel to meet her.)

NEW YORK—For the first time since the beginning of the European war, the Countess von Bernstorff, wife of the German ambassador to this country, has seen her husband. The countess arrived here on board the Frederick VIII. of the Scandinavian-American line, sailing from Copenhagen.

Except to say that she had been treated with the utmost consideration by the British officers who boarded the vessel at Kirkwall, the countess had no comment to make on her trip. Countess von Bernstorff was formerly Miss Joanne Luckemeyer of New York.

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Picked From Ruins on Black Tom Island—Lehigh Regulates Explosive Shipments.

JERSEY CITY, N. J., Sept. 15.—A one pound shell, picked up from the ruins of the explosion on July 26, at Black Tom island, which resulted in several deaths and property damage estimated at \$20,000,000, burst today when struck with a hammer and slightly injured three workmen.

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